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SPEECH
OF
MR. DECOSMOS

ON
THE PACIFIC RAILWAY ROUTE IN BRITISH
COLUMBIA.

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HANSARD REPORT

(Corrected.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, 25th Feb., 1878.

THE PACIFIC RAILWAY ROUTE IN
BRITISH COLUMBIA.

MOTION FOR RETURN.

MR. DECOSMOS moved for a return containing a copy of every report of the Chief Engineer, Acting Chief Engineer, or any other Engineer or Engineers of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in the possession of the Government, suggesting or recommending a survey, in 1876, of the whole or part of the route between Burrard's Inlet and Yellow Head Pass; with a copy of any order or instructions sent respecting the said survey; also, a copy of every report or reports from each and all of the said Engineers, in possession of the Government suggesting or recommending a survey, in 1877, of the said route between Burrard's Inlet

and Yellow Head Pass; with a copy of any order or instructions sent respecting such survey. He said his reason for making this motion was the fact that, from time to time, they had heard the hon. the Premier state, with respect to the Pacific Railway, that he had always acted on the recommendation of the Engineer. They had also heard it stated by the hon. the Premier, during the Session of 1876, that the railway route had been located as far west as Fort George in British Columbia. If the railway had been located as far as Fort George before 1876, it naturally arose that there was no necessity whatever for a survey in that year of any portion of the route between Yellow Head Pass and Burrard Inlet. He should, therefore, like to see the report of the engineer or engineers, on which this survey had been founded. Again, the route from Yellow Head Pass to Port Moody, or Burrard Inlet, was re-surveyed in 1877, but he found nothing whatever in the report of Mr. Flem-

ing, the Chief Engineer, to induce him to believe that Mr. Fleming had recommended a survey of that route in that year; on the contrary, if there was any evidence at all in the report, it was adverse to any recommendation from the Chief or Acting Engineer. It would be recollected that, in the Chief Engineer's report of 1877, page 61, the following comparison was made:—

"A comparison of the estimates which have been formed, shows that route No. 2 from Yellow Head Pass to Burrard Inlet, may, with a judiciously selected location, be established and completed for about \$2,000,000 more than route No. 6, terminating at Waddington Harbour."

Now, the Waddington Harbour route was the one in which the location had been made, as was stated in 1876. The southern route, No. 2, according to Mr. Fleming, would cost \$2,000,000 more than the Waddington Harbour route, which would be equivalent to fifty miles more railway, at a cost of \$40,000 a mile. It would be recollected that some references were made to the Admiralty in the year 1876, and the result of the enquiries made by them was summed up in the Chief Engineer's report in the following manner:

"From the naval testimony furnished, taken in conjunction with the Admiralty charts, the following deductions may be drawn:—

"1st. That a terminus near the outlet of the River Skeena would prove the nearest to the Asiatic coast, but that no decided opinion can be offered respecting the nautical advantage of a terminus in that quarter, as the waters have not been properly surveyed.

"2nd. That, as far as known, Burrard Inlet, an arm of the Strait of Georgia, and particularly English Bay, at its mouth, is the best harbour and the easiest of approach from the ocean.

"3rd. That the Strait of Georgia is separated from the ocean by two archipelagos, one to the north, the other to the south, of Vancouver Island.

"4th. That the approach by the north of Vancouver Island to the Strait of Georgia is hazardous and objectionable.

"5th. That the approach by the south of Vancouver Island is through passages more or less intricate between, or at no great distance from, islands known as the San Juan group.

"6th. That the most important islands of the San Juan group are in the territory of a foreign power, and that, from their position, they hold the power of assuming a threatening attitude towards passing commerce.

"Accordingly it is held important, if practicable, that the railway should terminate at a harbour, to gain which these islands need in no way be approached.

"On the outer coast of Vancouver Island there is no lack of harbours, the whole southern and western shores, from Esquimalt round

to Quatsino, 210 miles, being indented with harbours.

"An unbroken line of railway, from the railways of the Eastern Provinces of the Dominion to one of these harbours on the outer coast of Vancouver Island, would be exceedingly desirable. All the difficulties of navigation to be encountered in reaching the Mainland from the ocean would then be avoided."

Now it must be apparent to every member of this House that the Chief Engineer could not have recommended the survey of the Fraser River route in 1877; and, when they considered that that survey must have cost a large amount of money, probably \$50,000 more, it was right that they should be placed in possession of every document that would throw light, not merely upon the expenditure, but on the cause of that expenditure. He, therefore, moved that resolution.

MR. DEWDNEY said he considered it very desirable that the House should have every possible information with regard to this matter, and he, therefore, proposed to add to the resolution "Also a copy of all reports or other papers which induced the Government to delay the location survey in 1876." He was aware that there were other papers in the hands of the Government than the reports of the engineers, and, as these might have had some effect in influencing the Minister of Public Works to order the survey alluded to, he asked for the words to be inserted in the resolution.

MR. DECOSMOS said he did not see the force of the proposed addition. The Government of the Dominion paid the Chief Engineer, and the Acting Engineer, and, if the Government had acted upon their advice, it would be seen from a review of their reports.

MR. MACKENZIE: It is not necessary that the amendment should be made. I shall bring down all papers in the Department having reference to the matter.

MR. DEWDNEY said, that, in the case, he would not inflict on the Government the reading of a letter he had had the honour of addressing to the hon. the Minister of Public Works, as he promised that would be brought down with the other papers. He thought there might have been other papers which had led the Government

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to take the course they had; but he
 could not see why his hon. friend the
 member for Victoria (Mr. DeCosmos)
 should object to the survey. Some few
 years ago the hon. member said:

"Confederation on proper terms will give
 us population; will give us means to employ
 labour remuneratively; will enlarge our com-
 merce, and build up our industry. If it gives
 us public works, if it gives us a railroad from
 a point on the Fraser, below Yale, to Savona's
 Ferry on Lake Kamloops, and if we connect
 Lake Okanagan with the Spelmacheen River
 by railway, which is only about thirteen miles,
 not only will the whole country, from Osoyoos
 lake, on the boundary, behind the Cascades,
 be opened up and connected with our chief
 commercial city, with a cheap and speedy
 means of transportation, but all this tract of
 country, traversed by the railways and lake
 communication, will be utilized in producing
 wheat and wool and other articles for export-
 ation. Victoria then will be built up, and will
 be the chief commercial city of British
 Columbia, with all other parts of the colony
 tributary to her. This is what Confederation
 on proper terms would do for us.

These were the views of the hon. gen-
 tleman some years ago with regard to
 the Fraser River route, and he was
 sorry to see him now so bitterly op-
 posed to even a survey being made of
 that route. The hon. gentleman had
 now spoken about the estimates of last
 year in the reports of the cost of the
 different routes, and had stated that
 the Burrard Inlet route was estimated
 to cost two millions more than the Bute
 Inlet route. He (Mr. Dewdney) be-
 lieved—in fact he knew, that a report
 had already come down, and would be
 laid down before the House, he be-
 lieved, before very long, that would
 show a very different state of affairs.
 He found in the report of Mr. Marcus
 Smith the following in regard to the
 location of the Fraser River route:—

"The proportion of excessively heavy work
 is estimated to extend over 57 miles, including
 an aggregate of 7 to 8 miles of tunnelling. I
 do not think it probable that a better survey
 would materially alter this estimate."

He was glad to see a report brought
 down by the Minister of Public Works
 estimating the distance of extremely
 heavy work at 43 instead of 57 miles,
 and also that the tunnelling was little
 over two miles instead of seven or eight
 miles. He thought that was quite suf-
 ficient to convince any one that the
 House ought to be grateful to any one
 who had been the means of bringing
 about the survey of that road. He
 asked the hon. gentleman to

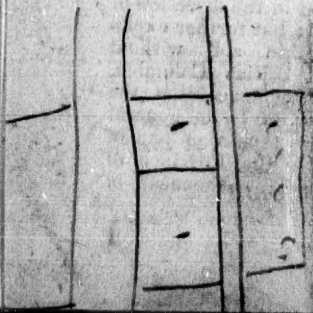
add to his motion, "also copies
 of all reports or other papers
 which induced the Government to
 delay the location survey until 1876."

MR. DECOSMOS said he was glad
 that the hon. the Prime Minister had
 been pleased to say that he would
 bring down the papers having refer-
 ence to the Fraser route. With regard
 to the utterances of his hon.
 friend the member for Yale (Mr.
 Dewdney), in reference to some-
 thing which he (Mr. DeCosmos) had
 said some ten years ago, he could
 assure his hon. friend that the position
 he occupied now, compared with that
 he occupied some years ago, proved
 that he was a progressive and not
 a standstill politician. During the
 progress of this Session he had
 heard reference made to what this
 or that gentleman of the respec-
 tive parties had said at some pre-
 vious time, as though it made any
 difference to the public what opin-
 ion they held last year or the year
 before, provided they were right
 now. He believed it was better to be
 right than to be consistent. Now, with
 regard to the extract that had been
 read, in which he spoke in favour of the
 railway from Yale to Savona's Ferry,
 while that hon. gentleman was connect-
 ed with the Government of British
 Columbia as surveyor, the prevailing
 impression was that the only route
 through British Columbia would be by
 Fraser River, Eagle Pass and Howse
 Pass to Edmonton, or *via* Vermillion
 Pass to Bow Fort and south Saskatch-
 ewan; and he (Mr. DeCosmos) did,
 at that period, speak in favour of
 the route by Yale. The first explora-
 tion party through Howse Pass,
 led by Mr. Moberly, brought back
 such information as induced the Chief
 Engineer, Mr. Fleming, to strike out
 that portion of the route altogether.
 Before that time they had the Palliser
 expedition, and the report of that also
 led the public mind in the direction of
 the southern route; but further explora-
 tions, both within and without the
 Province of British Columbia,
 brought conclusive evidence that the
 route of the railway, to be of general
 advantage to the Dominion and of
 special advantage to the Province of
 British Columbia, and to be the means of

building up a gigantic commercial city on the Pacific coast—a city that in his judgment would be the greatest city of the Dominion and would be the great outlet and inlet of that vast territory west of the 110th meridian, and north of it also—to do this the true line of the railway, so far as he could gather from the last report, was north even of Yellow Head Pass, taking the Pine River route and passing through the rich agricultural lands of Red River, to the north of Manitoba, and then north of the Saskatchewan, and through the Rocky Mountains into a tract of country which Mr. Selwyn, the geologist, and Mr. MacCoun, the botanist, had said was the best portion of territory in British Columbia for settlement. By that means, when a railway was brought down to the

common point at Fort George, it could be diverted to Bute Inlet, and, if necessary at any later time, to Fort Simpson. It would form a more advantageous and shorter line than any of the three or four lines now in operation or in course of construction to the south, in the States, and would give this country a great advantage over them, both as regarded ocean-going and overland traffic. He thought this reason was quite sufficient why he should change his views formed on the limited data possessed by him some eight or ten years ago. He was perfectly willing to change his views every day in the year provided he could make them better. He could not accept the proposed addition to his motion.

Motion agreed to.



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